

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 PC-10 AID-20 /163 R

DRAFTED BY AF/W:BDCURRAN:IW

APPROVED BY AF/W:JLLOUGHRAN

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R 172202Z APR 74

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 078271

DAKAR PASS BATHURST

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NG

SUBJECT: NIGER COUP

1. NIGER'S ARMY UNDER COMMAND OF CHIEF OF STAFF, LT. COL. SEYNI KOUNTCHE, SEIZED CONTROL NIGER GOVERNMENT IN SWIFT, EFFICIENT COUP APRIL 15. FORMER PRESIDENT DIORI HAMANI AND SEVERAL KEY OFFICIALS BEING HELD IN A MILITARY CAMP OUTSIDE NIAMEY. EMBASSY AND PRESS REPORTS INDICATE PROBABILITY MRS. DIORI KILLED RESISTING ARREST AND SEVERAL GUARDS KILLED IN ARMY ATTACK ON PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. LATEST INFORMATION INDICATES NIAMEY CALM WITH ARMY IN FULL CONTROL AND EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT COMING IN FROM OUTLYING AREAS AND POLITICALLY VOLATILE STUDENT GROUPS.

2. NEW ELEVEN-MAN MILITARY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED APRIL 17
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HEADED BY PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OF STATE, LT. COL. SEYNI.

SEYNI, 43, IS A DJERMA WITH 20 YEARS MILITARY EXPERIENCE INCLUDING INDO CHINA. DESCRIBED PREVIOUSLY AS BRIGHT, EFFECTIVE AND PRO-WEST, HE VISITED U.S. IN 1968. SEYNI ASSERTED ON RADIO NIAMEY NIGER FACING CATASTROPHE BROUGHT ON BY DROUGHT, MISMANAGEMENT AND CORRUPTION. HE CALLED FOR SOME CHANGES BUT SAID QUOTE THEY WILL NOT BE AS FAR-REACHING AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED UNQUOTE, HE ALSO HOPED FOR STRENGTHENED TIES WITH FRANCE. OTHER MEMBERS OF NEW GOVERNMENT ARE FROM SENIOR RANKS OF ARMY WITH NOTABLE EXCEPTION TWO MOST SENIOR HAUSA OFFICERS. DJERMA, FULANI AND SMALLER GROUPS FROM EASTERN NIGER DOMINATE TO VIRTUAL EXCLUSION MAJORITY HAUSA.

3. SAFETY OF FOREIGNERS HAS NOT BEEN IN QUESTION DURING COUP AND IMMEDIATE POST-COUP PERIOD. NEW REGIME HAS PLEDGED TO PROTECT LIVES AND PROPERTY. APPROXIMATELY 375 AMERICAN CITIZENS, INCLUDING OFFICIALS, DEPENDENTS, NON-OFFICIAL PERSONNEL, AND PCVS, CURRENTLY RESIDE IN NIGER. OUR EMBASSY IN NIAMEY HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO PLAY ANY QUESTION OF RECOGNITION IN LOWEST POSSIBLE KEY PENDING CLARIFICATION OF UNFOLDING EVENTS. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, ARMED FORCES, CITIZEN PROTECTION, POLITICAL STABILITY, PRESIDENT, POLITICAL PRISONERS, DEATHS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE078271
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: BDCURRAN:IW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740089-1046
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740435/aaaabfka.tel
Line Count: 82
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <06 JUN 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NIGER COUP
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, NG, (DIORI, HAMANI), (SEYNI, KOUNTCHE)
To: AF POSTS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005